

GREAT NORTHERN OF IRELAND RAILWAY.

COPY OF REPORT

TO THE

BOARD OF TRADE by Major-General HUTCHINSON, R.E., C.B., upon the circumstances attending the DEATH of a FIREMAN in the COMPANY'S service, and also upon the HOURS of LABOUR of the COMPANY'S SERVANTS; and of the BOARD OF TRADE'S letter to the RAILWAY COMPANY thereupon.

Board of Trade,
12th February 1894. }

MR. MUNDELLA.

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1894.

GREAT NORTHERN OF IRELAND RAILWAY.

Board of Trade, (Railway Department.)
4th January 1894.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to report for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 14th ultimo, the results of my enquiry into the circumstances connected with the suicide of Peter Sharkey, late a fireman in the employment of the Great Northern Railway Company of Ireland, who committed suicide in Dublin on the 8th ultimo, the jury in a rider to their verdict having expressed their condemnation of the excessive number of hours which officials on the railway in question are obliged to work.

I held the enquiry in the offices of the Company in Dublin on the 22nd ultimo. It was attended by the Locomotive Superintendent and by the Traffic Superintendent of the Railway Company.

The circumstances immediately preceding the suicide of the deceased are as follows:—

On the 7th ultimo, Sharkey was fireman with driver Thomas Tiernan, with whom he had been working regularly as fireman since October 1892. His duties on that day commenced at 8.30 a.m. in preparing his engine for taking the 9 a.m. passenger train from Dublin to Portadown. The train arrived at Portadown at 12 noon, one minute late; after attending to the engine, which occupied about half an hour, Sharkey had an interval of rest for about an hour, before preparing his engine for returning to Dublin at 2.30 p.m. with the 1.30 p.m. train from Belfast. The train arrived in Dublin at 5.47 p.m., 17 minutes late, the engine having next, at 6.50 p.m., to take a passenger train from Amiens Street station to the North Wall and thence to bring back a train of empty carriages, due at Amiens Street station at 7.15 p.m., but which did not actually arrive, in consequence of detention at the North Wall, till 7.55 p.m., 40 minutes late. While the engine was waiting at Amiens Street station before proceeding to the North Wall, Sharkey had received a message from the locomotive foreman at Amiens Street that after coming back from the North Wall, he would have to act as driver of a pilot engine for shunting in the Amiens Street goods yard; this would have occupied him about two hours, viz., from 10.30 p.m. to about 12.30 a.m., and Sharkey on receiving this message appears to have made no objection to undertaking the work.

After the engine arrived from the North Wall at 7.55 p.m., and the empty carriages had been disposed of, it went to the sheds, and at 8.40 p.m. Sharkey's duty with this engine was completed. Before leaving the sheds, for some reason which the evidence leaves uncertain, and which will be further alluded to hereafter, Sharkey informed the night foreman cleaner in the sheds that he would not undertake the shunting which he had previously stated his willingness to perform, and he thereupon went away to his home.

On the following morning a message was received by the locomotive foreman that Sharkey was ill and could not come to work, and in the evening he was informed that he had committed suicide.

The verdict at the inquest was to the effect that Sharkey committed suicide by cutting his throat while suffering from temporary insanity, the jury adding an expression of their condemnation of the excessive number of hours which officials on the Great Northern Railway of Ireland are obliged to work.

Evidence.

1. *Thomas Tiernan*, driver; 55 years' service, 20 years driver, nearly all the time stationed in Dublin.—Peter Sharkey had been my regular fireman since October 1892. Previously to this he had been my fireman for two years up to 1892, when he left me on being promoted to driver. The last day he worked with me was on Thursday, December 7th. His appointed time for commencing work was 8.30 a.m., the same as mine, for the 9 a.m. train. We took the train from Dublin to Portadown, arriving there about noon, leaving to come on duty at 2 p.m. to take up the 2.30 p.m. train from Portadown, i.e., the 1.30 p.m. train from Belfast. It took us about half an hour to attend to the engine, after which I should have about 1½ hours' rest, and Sharkey about an hour. We arrived in Dublin about 5.47 p.m., i.e., 17 minutes late. We were then waiting on the engine to take the 6.50 p.m. passenger train to the North Wall. This we did and had to wait at North Wall to bring back empty carriages to Amiens Street, where we arrived at 7.55 p.m. We should have been back

at 7.15 p.m., but were blocked at the North Wall. We then shunted the empty carriages in readiness for the limited mail next morning. This shunting was completed, and I reached the sheds at 8.40 p.m., Sharkey being still with me. After this I went home, Sharkey having left work about two minutes before me. Before we went to the North Wall, Sharkey was told by John Hayden, foreman cleaner, that Mr. Woods said that he would have to shunt with the pilot engine about the goods yard. When first asked he replied, "never fear," or words to that effect, meaning that he was willing to do the shunting. On coming back from the North Wall, and after reaching the shed, he changed his mind, and told Hayes, the night foreman cleaner, who had relieved Hayden, that he would not shunt, making some objection to the fireman who was to assist him. Hayes replied that he would give him a suitable fireman, after which I heard nothing more till I heard Sharkey go away, after which I did not see him again. The next morning Sharkey ought to have been with me at 8.30 a.m. to work the 10 a'clock

down train, but he did not turn up, and I heard that he had sent word that he was unwell. On Wednesday and Thursday he had complained of having a cold, but he performed his work properly. He was a man of very exorable temper, and I was cautious about crossing him. Had he proceeded with the shunting, as requested on the night of the 7th, it would have occupied him about two hours. He had often remarked to me that he thought Mr. Woods and Hayden were hard against him: I never myself saw any hardship extended towards him. My own impression was that the hardship he alluded to was his not being promoted again. I never heard him say anything about his being unable to make presents to Mr. Woods or anyone else. I have never myself known of presents being made to facilitate promotion. I have heard it spoken of amongst the men, but have no personal knowledge. I could not name anyone in particular who mentioned it. During the previous week and up to Thursday 7th, I had been working alternately on the 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. trains, returning with the 1.30 p.m. and 5 p.m. up trains from Belfast, i.e., the 2.30 p.m. and 5.50 p.m. up trains from Portadown, Sharkey having been with me throughout this time. The 5 p.m. up train is due in Dublin at 9.15 p.m., after which the train has to be shunted and the engine taken to the shed. On each of these occasions I signed off at 10.30 p.m. except on the 6th, when it was 10.45 p.m. On each of these trips with the 10 a.m. train Sharkey left work at the same time I did. With the 9 a.m. train I signed off on each occasion at 8.30 p.m., but on the 7th there was the extra trip to the North Wall, when I signed off at 8.40 p.m. I think Sharkey had no shunting to do on either of the five days, when he was fireman of the 9 o'clock train, after his return to Dublin. I am paid for work by the hour, 10 hours constituting a day's work, and overtime being paid for, after a week of 40 hours has been made up, at the rate of an eighth hour's day. Sunday stands by itself, and is paid for at the rate of an eighth hour's day, and overtime at the same rate. Sharkey had complained to me on Tuesday, the 4th, that he had not been paid for four hours' overtime in the previous fortnight, and asked me to write to Dundalk about this. I had told him I would do so, but had not done so before his death. He had said that it was owing, he supposed, to some mistake, and hid the blame on a clerk, Jones, for not having sent in the bill on the day he was driving. With the 10 a.m. train the leisure time at Portadown would be less by about half an hour, owing to shunting, than with the 9 a.m. train. When I stated at the inquest that Sharkey's hours on Monday, the 4th, and Wednesday, the 6th, were 14, I put in the word "about." These times ought to have been from my own bills 13 and 13½ hours respectively. I have been working the 9 and 10 a.m. trains all the time since October 1889 with Sharkey as fireman.

2. *Patsie Whelan*, guard: 14 years' service, 12 years' good.—I was guard of the 9 a.m. down train on the 4th, 5th, and 7th instant, and on the 5th and 7th Tiernan and Sharkey were driver and fireman of the train as far as Portadown, and also of the 1.30 afternoon train from Belfast on the 5th and 7th. We reached Portadown on the 5th at 11.39, and on the 7th 12 noon, the latter a minute late. On the 4th we reached Dublin at 5.39 p.m., and on the 7th at 4.47 p.m., 9 and 17 minutes late respectively. My working hours on those four days were from 8.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. I have never worked long enough hours to get overtime. I might have spoken to Sharkey, but if I did I saw nothing unusual with him. I know nothing about him after my train arrived in Dublin on the 7th.

3. *John Bates*, guard: 18 years' service, 12½ years' good.—I was guard of the 10 a.m. down train on December 4th and 6th, when Tiernan and Sharkey were driver and fireman of the train as far as Portadown. We arrived at Portadown on both days at 2.20, right time, and arrived back in Dublin at

9.15 p.m. and 9.39 p.m., the train being 34 minutes late on 6th. On neither occasion had I any conversation with Sharkey. My hours one week are from 9.30 a.m. to about 9.30 p.m., and on the other week from 8.30 a.m. to 5.45 p.m. I get overtime on Sundays, viz., a full day's pay, working from 4 to 10 p.m. every alternate Sunday.

4. *John William Woods*, locomotive fireman in Dublin: 30 years' service, seven years in my present position.—I have 15 drivers and 15 firemen under my orders. Peter Sharkey was one of the firemen, and has been under me the whole seven years. Foremen cleaners Hayden and Hayes are next under me. Hayden acts by day and Hayes by night. Sharkey was promoted to driver in 1887, and was employed in shunting at Drogheda, where he became ill with brain-fever, and was away without notice from September 1889 to January 1890, when he came back and was appointed fireman in Dublin, and has held this position ever since. I had seen him for the last time on the morning of the 7th before starting with the 9 a.m. for Portadown. I did not speak to him, and he made no complaint to me about being ill or not being paid for overtime. On Thursday 7th, about 9 p.m., I was informed by Hayes that Sharkey had refused to shunt upon returning from the North Wall, Hayden having informed me about 6 p.m. that Sharkey had consented to do the shunting after returning from the North Wall, the work commencing about 10.20 p.m. and lasting till 12.30 a.m., and this time would have reckoned for overtime at drivers' rate of pay, however few hours in the week he had made as fireman. Hayes told me that Sharkey simply said he would not do the shunting, whereupon I got another man to do it. After this I heard nothing more of Sharkey till a policeman came to me about 9.30 on Friday night 8th and told me that Sharkey had cut his throat, except that I had had a message in the morning from a woman who stated that Sharkey was ill and could not come to work, to which I replied, "I could do without him and did not want him to-day." On Sunday, November 26th, about 4.30 p.m., Tiernan had come to me and complained that Sharkey would not do his work for him. I told him I did not do railway business on Sundays, but that I would see about it on Monday. On Monday evening, when the engine had returned to the sheds after its day's work, I asked Sharkey in Tiernan's presence how it was he (Sharkey) was not doing his work. He replied, "Mr. Woods, what is it I am not doing, don't you see me doing my work?" "I always see you doing your work when you are here," I replied. "Now Tiernan, what have you to say to Sharkey," upon which Tiernan replied, "it was all right," after which I had no particular conversation with Sharkey and no complaint from him. I did not observe any friction between Tiernan and Sharkey except on this occasion. I was not aware that Sharkey had complained of not being paid for overtime till I heard it at the inquest, after which I ascertained that he had not been paid for a day's work as driver, owing to his not having sent in his bill. I deny the statement that I have ever been heard upon Sharkey, having had no occasion to be, except that now and then I have had to find fault with him for being late on duty. I never observed any signs of flightiness about him, he was always very sensible before me. I deny the statement made at the inquest that I have been in the habit of receiving presents from my subordinates. I have no reason to think that Hayden was heard upon Sharkey, all that Hayden could do would be to tell me about any irregularity of Sharkey's, and this he had never done. I had not thought it wrong to ask Sharkey to shunt after his day's work on the 7th, which would have made him 16 hours on duty, as he might have been off duty the next day, and could have been off certainly till 1 p.m.

5. *Michael Hayes*, foreman cleaner at night in the Dublin sheds: seven years' service, fireman two years and foreman cleaner eight months.—I knew Peter Sharkey and last saw him about 8.40 p.m.

on Thursday 7th, after he had brought his engine into the shed. He began a conversation by telling me that he would not shunt, as he had promised Hayden he would before going to the North Wall, and that I was to tell Mr. Woods. He was to not be driver of the shunting engine, and before he had refused to shunt he asked who was to be his fireman, and I showed him the man, viz., Greenaway, and he said he would not take him, and after this he said he would not shunt at all, and then and there he went away. I have never seen him since. At this time he did not appear ill, nor did I notice anything odd about him. I had never before had to ask Sharkey to shunt. Sharkey was that kind of man that if I had asked him why he would not shunt, I am sure he would not have answered me. The conversation between Sharkey and me took place some distance from the engine, so that Thomas could not hear what passed as he was on the engine.

6. *John Hayden*, foreman cleaner by day in the Dublin sheds.—I have been 18 years in railway service, 15 years on this railway, 3 years fireman, 14 years foreman cleaner; all the time in Dublin. I was well acquainted with Sharkey, and have known him since 1878, and have had to do with him during this time, except when he was away two years in Drogheda. I last saw him alive on Thursday the 7th. I saw him in the morning and again in the evening, after his arrival with the 5.30 p.m. train at the platform. I had come from the sheds with orders from Mr. Woods that he was to act as driver of the shunting engine after he had come back from the North Wall. He said he would do it and made no objection whatsoever. I observed nothing at all wrong with him. I never saw him again, having left work at 7.0 p.m. He was not a difficult man to get on with, and not one I should be afraid to ask a question of. He had never complained of either Mr. Woods or me being hard upon him. I have never heard or known of firemen making presents to the foreman. I never did so myself when I was a fireman. Hayden told me next morning that Sharkey had refused to shunt, but did not say why, and I did not ask him the reason why. It was disobedience of orders on the part of Sharkey to refuse to shunt, unless he had sufficient reason for his refusal.

7. *Henry Deane*, fireman; five years service, two years fireman.—John Reilly is my regular driver.

My hours of work during the week commencing November 27th were from about 12.15 p.m. till 1 a.m., out of which time I am in shed from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and sometimes more. I have also to work every second Sunday, for which I am paid overtime. The times entered in the time bill correctly describe my work between 27th November and 9th December. I know nothing about Sharkey thinking Mr. Woods or Hayden was hard upon him, and I know nothing about presents being made to Mr. Woods by firemen.

8. *Thomas Conway*, fireman; seven years' service, four years fireman.—John Conway is at present my regular driver. I have been with him about three weeks. I was working with him on the week commencing 4th December, with the Oldcastle goods train and Howth passenger train. On the 4th, 6th, and 8th I commenced work at about 6.30 a.m., and signed off about 3 p.m. I had an other work on these three days. On the 5th, 7th, and 8th I commenced work at about 4.45 with goods trains, which were due back in Dublin at 9.15, but arrived at 9.27, 10.20, and 10.20. On the down journey we have to stand at Drogheda an average of two hours. I receive overtime for any hours worked more than 60 in the week. I have no knowledge of the alleged practice of giving presents to the foreman. I have to work every alternate Sunday, for which I am paid overtime.

9. *Patrick Keogh*, fireman; 12 years' service, 7 years fireman.—My driver is Michael Carroll, with whom I have been about seven or eight months. During the two weeks commencing 27th November I was working alternately the 9 and 10 a.m. down trains from Dublin to Portadown, and was due back at 5.30 and 9.15 p.m. I joined my engine about half-an-hour before train time and left work about half-an-hour after arriving. The hours of work given in the time-table are correct. On the 8th we had to take a train to the North Wall and back with empty carriages after arriving in Dublin. With the 9 o'clock train there is about half-an-hour rest at Portadown, and about the same with the 10 a.m. train. I knew Sharkey well and last saw him at Portadown on Thursday 7th. He seemed to be in his usual health. He never told me that either Mr. Woods or Hayden was hard upon him. He did not tell me he had not been paid for overtime. I never made a present to the fireman and do not know anyone who ever did, but I have heard the remark.

Conclusion.

On consideration of the foregoing evidence and of a return, which has been supplied to me by the Locomotive Superintendent of the Great Northern Railway of Ireland, of the hours worked by the drivers and firemen who are stationed in Dublin, it appears that the hours worked by the deceased fireman Sharkey for the 10 working days between 27th November and 7th December next preceding his death were—

Date.	Time.	No. of Hours.
November 27	8.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m.	10
" 28	8.30 " 10.30 "	13
" 29	8.30 " 6.30 "	10
" 30	9.30 " 10.10 "	13
December 1	8.30 " 6.30 "	10
" 2	8.30 " 10.30 "	13
" 3	Sunday not at work.	
" 4	9.30 a.m. to 10.30 p.m.	13
" 5	8.30 " 6.30 "	10
" 6	9.30 " 10.45 "	13½
" 7	8.30 " 5.40 "	12½

These hours include an unoccupied time at Portadown of about an hour on the 27th and 29th November, 1st, 5th, and 7th December, and of about half-an-hour on the other days. It will thus be seen that on the last day but one on which Sharkey worked he had been on duty 13½ hours, and that on four other days out of the 10 he had been employed for 13 hours, these long days alternating with shorter ones of 10 hours each, except in the case of the intervening Sunday on 3rd December, when he

was not at work. On the last day he worked his hours were actually 12½, but if he had carried out his intention of performing the shunting which he had in the first instance expressed his willingness to do, his hours would have amounted to 16, including one hour's rest at Portadown between 1 and 2 p.m. and nearly two hours between 8.40 p.m., the time at which his ordinary work actually ceased, and 10.30 p.m., that at which the shunting was to commence.

Had Sharkey carried out his intention of shunting for two hours after his regular day's work, his hours (including one hour's rest at Portadown, and nearly two hours at Dublin before commencing to shunt) would have amounted to 16, and might well have been considered excessive; the 12½ hours (including one hour's rest at Portadown) which he had actually worked on the day before his death may, however, be regarded as longer than are desirable.

With regard to the hours worked by Sharkey on the 6th, viz., 13½, and on four alternate previous days, viz., 13, these may properly be looked upon as being considerably in excess of what are right in the case of men holding the responsible post of fireman. On the four other days, making up the 10 working days before his death, his hours of work were 10, and these are reasonable.

The reason of Sharkey refusing to shunt after having consented to do so is not obvious. It appeared in evidence that he was to act as driver of the shunting engine, and did not approve of the fireman who had been told off to work with him. My own idea is that he was probably beginning to feel ill from the attack of influenza which was soon after developed, and felt that he was not equal to any more work.

With the exception of driver Tiernan, who said that Sharkey appeared to have a cold on the 6th and 7th, none of the other witnesses who had last seen him had observed any signs of illness about him. I was unable to elicit any information as to the reason of Sharkey, as stated at the inquest, having thought Mr. Woods, the locomotive foreman in Dublin, or Haydon, the foreman cleaner, were hard upon him.

Sharkey's non-receipt of pay for overtime appears to have been due to some mistake which would have been rectified.

Mr. Woods emphatically denied the allegation made at the inquest that he had been in the habit of receiving presents from those under him, and none of the other witnesses I examined could or would throw any light on the allegation.

The record of Sharkey's service is a somewhat peculiar one, and is as follows:—Engaged as cleaner in 1873, age 14; passed as fireman June 1878; passed as driver July 1882; reduced to fireman December 1884 for causing collision in Dublin yard; re-appointed driver November 1887. Became ill with brain fever and left his duty without notice from September 1889 to January 1890. Re-engaged as fireman in January 1890.

In consequence of the remarks of the jury as a rider to their verdict, with reference to the excessive number of hours worked by officials on the Great Northern Railway of Ireland, I requested the Locomotive Superintendent to supply me with a return for the fortnight ending 8th December of the hours of work of all the drivers and firemen stationed in Dublin, and from an analysis of this return, which includes 15 drivers and their firemen—the accuracy of which I tested by calling such of the men as happened to be available—I regret to find that in the following cases (excluding those of Tiernan and Sharkey) the hours must be looked upon either as longer than desirable or as excessive, viz.:—

Names of Men.	Excessive Hours.	No. of Days on which Excessive Hours were worked	Remarks.
Driver Carroll	12 30 to 13 0	7 out of 12	Those hours include about half-an-hour off duty daily.
Fireman Keogh			
Driver Conway			
Fireman Billings			
Fireman Cummins	16 27 to 19 03	6 out of 11	The men were relieved the day after the long day of 19 hours 32 minutes.
Driver Ryan			
Fireman Field	15 0 to 18 25	7 out of 12	One hour off for dinner.
Driver Billings			
Fireman Foote and others	12 35 to 14 20	11 out of 12	"
Driver Murphy			
Fireman Sherlock	12 30 to 15 35	12 out of 12	Two to three hours' rest in shade with sight.
Driver Byrne			
Fireman O'Farrell	14 0 to 15 35	3 out of 12	
Driver Byrne			
Fireman Field and others	12 15 to 18 0	4 out of 11	In the 18 hours case the train was standing at Kells for 5 hours. In another case of 17½ hours the driver was fined for not reporting himself for relief.

In the cases of drivers Carroll, Conway, Ryan, and Byrne, and their firemen, the days of short hours to a certain extent alternate with those of long ones; but this fact does not, in my opinion, justify the latter, however much the men (as it is stated they do) prefer the system.

In view of the (in some cases) excessively long hours which are worked by the drivers and firemen stationed in Dublin, it is for the consideration of the Board of Trade whether, before deciding upon what action to take, they should not call for a return of the hours worked by drivers and firemen on all other parts of the line.

The Assistant Secretary,
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

I have, &c.,
C. S. HUTCHINSON,
Major-General, R.E.

RAILWAY REGULATION ACT, 1893.

Board of Trade, (Railway Department),
16th January 1894.

SIR,

I AM directed by the Board of Trade to enclose, for the information of the directors of the Great Northern of Ireland Railway Company, a copy of the report of Major-General Hutchinson, C.B., R.E., as regards the circumstances attending the suicide of a fireman named Peter Sharkey, in the employ of the Company, and the excessive hours of labour of the Company's servants, to which the jury at the inquest on Sharkey drew attention.

It appears that out of the 10 working days preceding the day of his death, Sharkey had worked long hours on six occasions; in one instance his day's work having extended to 13½ hours.

It also appears from the enquiry made as to the hours of the Company's drivers and firemen stationed in Dublin that, during the fortnight ended the 9th ultimo, they had in many instances on several days, and in one case on every day, worked for periods of time which the Board concur with Major-General Hutchinson in regarding as excessive.

I am, therefore, directed specially to refer to the provisions of the Railway Regulation Act, 1893, and to request that your Company will be good enough to submit, for the consideration of the Board, within one month from the date of this communication, such a schedule of time for the duty of the drivers and firemen stationed in Dublin as will bring their actual hours of work within reasonable limits.

The Board will be glad to hear that you are prepared to treat this letter as a formal order made upon your Company by the Board in pursuance of the powers of the above-mentioned Act.

I am also to request that this Department may be furnished, at your early convenience, with a return of the hours worked during the fortnight ended the 9th ultimo by all the drivers and firemen employed by the Company at other places than Dublin.

I am, &c.,
(Signed) FRANCIS J. S. HORWOOD.

The General Manager,
Great Northern of Ireland Railway Company.

GREAT NORTHERN OF IRELAND
RAILWAY.

COPY OF REPORT to the BOARD OF TRADE
by Major-General HITCHCOCK, R.E., C.B.,
upon the circumstances attending the DEATH
of a FIREMAN in the COMPANY'S service, and
also upon the HORROR of LAMBETH of the
COMPANY'S STEAMERS; and of the BOARD
OF TRADE'S letter to the RAILWAY COMPANY
thereupon.

Board of Trade, }
12 February 1904. } Mr. MUNDELLA.

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